REDEFINING TEACHER EVALUATION

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to the
Conference on Teacher Evaluation
The School Administrators' Council of
Newfoundland and Labrador

St. John's

January 31, 1981

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Redefining Teacher Evaluation

Last August I received a call from a district school superintendent stating his interest in a program of evaluation for all the teachers in his district, his belief in the potential of evaluation for in-service training, and the improvement of the total teaching-learning milieu in the school systems. Although he found many of the recent journal articles on the subject to be interesting, yet he concluded that much of the literature was too general, not explicit enough, or too hazy or too soft for an appropriate model of evaluation for his district or probably for other districts which might be wrestling with his type of problem of evaluation.

During the telephone conversation he posed several questions: (1) How can teacher evaluation be defined and practiced so that teachers could feel that they were part of a process which helped them and the school system to grow and develop? (2) How could the purposes of evaluation be clarified so that teachers are more likely to perceive that the evaluative behaviors will be more beneficial to them? (3) Could there be more emphasis on formative evaluation as a continuous, ongoing cooperative endeavour, as opposed to evaluation for perceived negative purposes such as termination of contracts? (4) How could the job content of the person with responsibility for evaluation be determined? Would the teachers have some say as to what that job content might be? (5) What should be the specific roles of principals and assistant superintendents in evaluation of teacher performance? And finally, (6) Can a more positive process of evaluation than that presently used be devised? That is, one that really works, that meets the needs of teachers, administrators, boards, and the profession? He intimated that school boards and the University should, through the Faculty of Education, work on these problems and devise

models of evaluation that can improve the performance of teachers in all school districts. For the past two days you administrators have been discussing the whole realm of teacher assessment and evaluation. Today, I would like to confine my remarks to that superintendent's concerns.

Some definitions of evaluation

From a commonly accepted point of view, evaluation means determining the worth, value, or quality of a person, object or facility. From the point of view of professionals (including teachers), it is the process used in the evaluation or assessment which eventually determines the positive worth or value of the person being evaluated or helped. George Bernard Shaw, in Pygmalion, took the professional view of evaluation when he stated that the difference between a lady and a flower-girl is not in how she behaves, but in how she is treated. Evaluation, then, is defined as a process, not as an end in itself, but a means to an end - for the teacher or administrator, this end might be the development of the person to be the best that he or she is capable of becoming.

Evaluation of teachers is help and guidance given in self-assessment so that they can use the talents and abilities they possess to the maximum in the high calling of teaching and learning. Put another way, evaluation is helping the teacher in the content, processes, and outcomes of his/her work so that the student can be helped to receive the best education possible. It is a conscientious, deliberate endeavour to bring out the true worth, value, and quality of the teacher. Professional evaluation, then, is not assessment of a person on the basis of subjective criteria; rather, it is a report on how a person has improved after he/she has been helped. This process is one that helps not only the teacher, but

also those who accept the responsibility for evaluating, that is, the principal, the assistant superintendent, the supervisor, or "other teachers." Evaluation never stops; rather, it is a broad, continuous programme involving a carefully ordered inquiry agreed upon by all participants to determine worth, value, quality, and effectiveness of content, process, and outcomes in light of clearly defined goals agreed upon by all those involved in the venture. Evaluation is a set of activities where administrators and supervisors work with and through people to influence and pursue goals, and where the process lifts the members of the institution to greater fulfillment and accomplishment. The experience is one that in no way hinders or hurts the member, but an experience like "good wine shared." Whereas evaluation is improving the teaching-learning process, it is also concerned with examining and clarifying values so that teachers can develop a better understanding of those behaviours that are appropriate for them. As Zahorik has pointed out, "values bring consistency, commitment, and support to teacher behaviour. They are essential for the improvement of instruction and the growth of the teacher." (Zahorik, 1978) As John Stapleton stated in his address to you in 1977, "evaluation is to give recognition to good teaching, to foster professional growth", and to allow as many as possible to participate in that growth. Nurturing responsibility, tapping creativity and imagination, and providing an environment where people can develop a commitment to the schools, is what evaluation is all about. It follows, then, that <u>all</u> teachers should be involved in the process that takes as its primary purpose the development and improvement of the members of the organization.

Let me reiterate here that I am stressing formative evaluation, that is, evaluation which is able to shape, develop, motivate, and help and steer the teacher on to a continuous path of steady improvement, an evaluation which is productive and satisfying to all concerned, as opposed to what is generally termed summative evaluation, which is a summary-type of activity often useful for the purpose of assessing teachers for tenure or promotion. For the benefit of the majority of teachers, I hope that you will place your emphasis on formative evaluation, a continuous program which uses all its results and findings to improve the professional performance of all teachers. This positive process of formative evaluation is, I believe, congruent with the teacher evaluation policy of your Newfoundland Teachers' Association. Again, I certainly see no conflict between the principles of formative evaluation and article 14:01 of your collective agreement which states that "the prime purpose of evaluation shall be the increased effectiveness of personnel in improving instruction."

Some School Board Policies Regarding Evaluation

Whereas it is hoped that you might put in place a positive evaluation programme which will engender increased effectiveness of your teachers, it is expedient that school boards will also develop policy statements of evaluation which will support and underpin your own professional stance. An analysis of the policies and practices followed by eight school boards in Eastern Newfoundland showed the following:

Board A - policy of evaluation covered only probationary teachers; purpose - to help new teachers get off to a good start; there was no reference made to the increased effectiveness or evaluation of tenured teachers.

Board B - no evaluation policy developed or implemented; the Board was considering a rating system for "summative evaluation."

Board C - school principals and supervisors are responsible for evaluation of teacher performance; all probationary teachers must be evaluated, while other teachers may be evaluated from time to time. The Board is considering a new policy of evaluation which takes as its main purpose the improvement and professional growth of all its teachers.

Board D - principals and general supervisors are responsible for the evaluation of probationary and interim-certificated teachers. These are observed three times, and summative evaluations applied for purposes of tenure decisions.

Board E - This Board has no formally stated policy regarding the evaluation of tenured teachers. The professional staff is perplexed over this lack, and the superintendent has advised the trustees that "a cooperative, ongoing program of teacher evaluation fosters a climate of professional development leading, ultimately, to an improved teaching-learning situation," and that "teacher evaluation is essential at every level of the educational enterprise."

Board F - Again, there is no policy of evaluation for tenured teachers but a written policy for the evaluation of those non-tenured. A proposed new policy, which emphasizes growth of the teacher in teacher-student relationships, curriculum development, subject competency, techniques of instruction, and personal growth, is now before the Board.

Board G - The Board has a policy statement regarding the evaluation of non-tenured teachers. Its main function is to get new teachers "off to a good start."

Board H - This Board has recently introduced a new evaluation policy which emphasizes the growth and enhancement of all teachers and other staff. The process stated is "maximum improvement through mutual trust and understanding" of the purposes of evaluation. The 'team approach' is emphasized.

Hindrances to constructive evaluation

In spite of the positive connotations of evaluation as we have defined it, it would be foolhardy of principals and others responsible for a program of assessment of teacher performance to ignore the various hindrances to such a process. First of all, as I have stated elsewhere, teachers may initially interpret evaluation, regardless of how helpful, to be an invasion of their professional prerogatives. A history of checklists, and bureaucratic procedures have soured many a professional from participation in any kind of evaluative procedure. Another hindrance is that, often, those who have the responsibility for evaluation perceive themselves or are perceived as lacking in authority. To be a helper of teachers or an evaluator of teacher performance, one must have authority. By authority here is meant the willingness of a group to be affected by the ability of others, or a person's willingness to be lead or guided or helped by others. This is sometimes referred to as functional authority, which may stem from special or

technical knowledge and competence, the personal attributes of the one who helps to evaluate, fundamental knowledge which he may possess of human beings, various techniques of persuasion, as well as fundamental skills in certain supervisory and evaluative processes such as eliciting problem-solving behaviours (which will be touched on later). To be helpful, the evaluator must acquire authority. Unless those responsible for developing, to the utmost, the talents of teachers are open, cooperative, and engender mutual understanding and support, any attempts to influence professional teachers will be anxiety-provoking and frustrating. Dr. Tom Williams, in his presentation to the School Administrators' Conference on April 25, 1980, said, "I wish you the insight to know your dreams, the wisdom to nurture them, the love to share them, and the courage to live them." This courage must be accompanied by expertise in dealing with, and attempting to, help those for whom evaluation is perceived an an anxiety-ridden exercise.

Assumptions about Teachers

There is no need to remind you that the processes, techniques, and procedures of evaluation are changing as our societal attitudes are changing. In the past fifty years the North American societal institutions have evolved from a supervisory stance of institutional control exemplified by decision-making at the top; transmitting orders to workers, inspection, and subjective value judgments, to a phase of personal and institutional growth and development exemplified by respect for humanity, caring for people, providing an enabling and facilitating climate, continuous growth, sharing and involvement, empathy and understanding. The function of evaluation in the new phase is to bring out the 'best' in a member of the institution in terms of the needs of the organization, its expressed purposes, and the needs of its clients.

This approach to professional evaluation is based upon relatively

new assumptions about people in organizations and, in the case of schools, about teachers. One assumption is that the motivation or potential for development is present in all people. The task of the evaluator is to find out what motivates a teacher, what turns a teacher on, what his/her potential is, and to guide that person through a process of development. Another assumption is that, although many people in a given society may not be creative, they have the potential to be creative. However, there will be a terrible waste of talent and ability if people are left to their own resources, if the institution provides no one to work with, and through, those persons to develop the abilities they possess. Formative evaluation based on these assumptions brings no loss but much gain as people are helped to grow through acquisition of professional knowledge, loyalty to clients, and a sense of responsibility. What is the theory behind this kind of evaluation? The literature on motivation indicates that the chief sources of satisfaction of a member of an institution are a sense of achievement, a feeling of responsibility, a chance for recognition, opportunity for advancement and growth, and satisfaction from work itself. If, in your process of evaluation, you can make these sources of satisfaction congruent with the declared purposes of the school and the welfare of your teachers, then you are well on the road to instructional improvement.

The job content of the evaluator

When you talk about evaluation to help the teacher achieve well in the teaching-learning process, you have to consider the needs of the school and some of the major responsibilities of the teacher, such as those pointed out by Dr. Don Musella in his talk of yesterday morning: teacher-student relationships, instructional methodology, planning, classroom management, subject competency, teacher-staff relationships, contributions to the total school plant, curriculum development, and student evaluation. However, the

job content of evaluation can include other tasks, such as helping the teacher evaluate the intellectual functioning of the child, achievement in various areas, personal-social adjustment, growth in interest, attitudes, skills, and habits of students. Moreover, the content of evaluation might include helping the teacher determine pupil needs, helping to set realistic goals, helping to gather information on the environment of the school which affects learning, as well as helping him/her clarify and sharpen his/her thinking about problems in the teaching-learning milieu.

The processes of evaluation

The process of evaluation can take many forms, but to be effective it must be positive, open, and characterized by the participants' willingness to share and listen. It includes understanding and supporting the psychological and social needs of the participants, accepting the feelings of others, praising, encouraging, developing a real interest in the welfare of those being evaluated, and displaying integrity. Moreover, it includes involvement of the teachers according to their area of competence, and searching for alternative methods to attain success.

One orderly way of conducting evaluation is through a series of observations and conferences where the evaluator and the teacher concentrate on certain growths and development. First phase in this cycle is the preobservation conference where objectives and focus are clarified and identified in a cooperative manner. Next phase is the observation in a classroom situation where both the evaluator and the teacher gather data on the focus of concentration. Next follows the post-observation conference where what took place previously is now evaluated by both participants. In this post-appraisal conference, participants summarize what was attempted and what was accomplished. Almost invariably, the result should be a sense of achievement and accomplishment for the teacher. A report of successes

should always be given; for this gives the teacher a sense of recognition for services provided. For evaluation to be affective in helping the teachers to grow, the teachers must receive feedback on their successes in achieving realistic objectives. In summary, in the process of evaluation it can be said that complete trust and confidence are displayed; the evaluator is supportive in all situations to achieve goals; there is freedom of discussion; there is constructive use of ideas and opinions; attitudes are favourable, positive, and stimulating; there is effective communication, candid questioning; and there is provision of accurate, relevant information with a high concern for achievement of objectives. The process must promote the security, social esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization needs of the teacher. The success variables of such an approach can be measured through the improved performance and growth of the teacher, both personal and professional, and in the improvements in the teaching-learning situation.

As Dr. Don Musella has indicated to you at this conference, there are evaluation procedures and processes which can be used in promoting teacher growth. One exercise that I have found extremely useful in helping teachers find solutions to particular problems which they have identified, is known as <u>eliciting problem-solving technique.</u> The component parts of this method are:

1. Rapport and structure
   (a) The evaluator is able to put partner at ease, is friendly, inspires trust.
   (b) The nature of the session is established early.
2. Attending behaviour
   (a) alert position
   (b) eye contact
   (c) verbal following

3. Empathy

   Responding with accuracy to what the teacher is saying.

4. Defining the Problem

   (a) identifying antecedent and consequential behaviours

   (b) generating alternative behaviours

   (c) devising a new course of action

5. Follow-up.

In this talk, we have considered evaluation from the formative point of view of continuous improvement of the teacher; we have considered the assumptions we make about professional teachers, and we have attempted to show why teachers are likely to improve the content, processes, and outcomes of their teaching through effective, formative evaluation. Finally, we have considered some of the processes which would be used in such evaluation. In this process, the most effective evaluator in helping the teacher grow and develop is the principal of the school. I know that you will endeavour to do all you can to ensure that all your teachers are evaluated in a positive manner, so that the teaching-learning process can be enhanced.